

THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE HOME LITERARY ENVIRONMENT AND  
THE READING ACHIEVEMENT OF LOW SOCIOECONOMIC  
DISABLED READERS

By

ADRIENNE MILLS PERRY

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By

Adrienne Mills Perry

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The purpose of this study was to investigate the relationship of a home literary environment and the reading achievement of low socioeconomic disabled readers.

Seventy-four students from three Orange County schools in Orlando, Florida, participated in the study. They were students in grades four, five, and six who were identified as disabled readers for their grade level. They also met the criteria of low socioeconomic subjects as they qualified for free or reduced school lunches. The children received four selected youth periodicals (alphabetically, Daisy, Highlights for Children, Ranger Rick's Wildlife Nature Magazine, and Wee Wisdom) and related teaching materials prepared by the examiner each month for eight months and were visited monthly by the examiner. Parents were directed to encourage their children to use the magazines and other materials provided.

The method of investigation was an experimental study which compared an experimental group who received selected

children's periodicals and participated in a daily family reading period and a control group who did not receive any special treatment. The data were analyzed for differences in gains made in pre- and posttest scores on the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test. It was hypothesized that the availability of reading materials and participation in daily family reading periods and the sex of the participants would yield no significant mean differences between the experimental and control groups.

Multivariate analyses of variance were conducted and the findings suggested that low socioeconomic disabled readers can benefit from the program provided for the experimental group. It was also suggested that direct parental involvement in student learning experiences can result in improved student achievement.

It was further suggested that future studies investigate the feasibility of daily family reading periods, weekly visits from an examiner, and uses of other periodicals to ascertain the effectiveness of this approach to improve reading.



## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

#### Statement of the Problem

The family is a primary educational unit and most parents want to help their children succeed in school. Research relative to children's reading achievement (Della Piana et al., 1966; Durkin, 1961, 1963, 1964; Thorndike, 1973) points directly to the importance of an educational environment in which parents are involved in teaching their children or, at least, indicating to their children that they value learning to read.

#### Limitations of the Study

The limitations of this investigation were as follows:

1. The study involved 86 disabled readers in grades four through six in three urban schools in Florida.
2. The population was selected from low socioeconomic homes.
3. The examiner was limited by the number and type of magazines which were donated by the publishers.
4. Status and progress in reading achievement were established by scores made on alternate forms on one standardized reading test, the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test.

5. Many of the parents and guardians of the participants were unable to read well enough to help their children with the reading exercises.

### Justification for the Study

It has been only recently that the potentials for home involvement in the schools have been utilized. Early childhood intervention programs have been successful for the most part in educating parents to work successfully with their pre-school children. There is a paucity of research on how socioeconomic levels and family interaction directly affect the reading achievement of older students.

The differences in reading abilities between disabled disadvantaged readers and their middle class peers are well-documented. A depressed economical situation may limit low income parents from purchasing reading materials for their children.

The problem which was studied herein was to determine how the inclusion of reading materials (literary environment) and family interaction could improve the reading achievement of disabled readers from low socioeconomic homes. The availability of periodicals and books and a positive reading environment may be a contributing factor in the improved reading ability of these youths. Positive results from this study could indicate to school officials that (a) a systematic procedure of providing disabled readers with reading materials would be beneficial and desirable and (b) parental involvement

in the educational achievement of children encourages and facilitates the kinds of desired behavior.

### Definition of Terms

The following terms are defined according to their use in this study:

Low socioeconomic students refers to students from families with total earnings of \$4,780.00 or less, families eligible for public assistance, or families who qualified for free and reduced school lunches.

Disabled readers refers to those students whose total reading achievement scores ranged between stanines 2-4 on a standardized reading test and were in grades four through six.

Family was defined as the group the students lived with.

Mother and father were those individuals who were responsible for general care and welfare of the child or those individuals who assumed 90% of the responsibility of the child.

Daily practice materials refers to materials written by the examiner to guide and assist parents in helping their children improve their reading ability.

Children's periodicals describes magazines written especially for youth in certain age and grade levels.

Readability level refers to the grade level reading difficulty of the materials as determined by a readability formula.

## Procedures

The following null hypotheses were tested:

Hypothesis 1. There is no significant mean difference in the reading gains of an experimental group of low socioeconomic disabled readers who have daily family reading periods using selected children's periodicals and a similar control group who do not have daily family reading periods using selected children's periodicals as measured by the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Forms A and B.

Hypothesis 2. There is no significant mean difference between the sexes in the experimental group and the amount of reading gains as measured by the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Forms A and B.

Hypothesis 3. There is no significant mean interaction relative to sex and utilization of reading materials as measured by the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Forms A and B.

Differences at or below the 5% probability for occurrence were considered statistically significant.

### Description of the Sample

The sample was drawn with the help of reading resource teachers at three area elementary schools in Orange County, Florida. These schools were representative of the disadvantaged school population and were eligible for federal funds as classified by the Elementary and Secondary Education Act (ESEA).

One hundred and eighty lower income children from grades three through six were identified as disabled readers for their grade level as each had reading test scores in stanines 2 through 4 (low and low average) on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills.

This group of names was checked against the school's free and reduced lunch records. All of the families of the sample population met government requirements for participation in the free or reduced school lunch program.

A letter was sent to the parents of the sample group (see Appendix A). It ascertained their willingness to participate in a program to improve their child's reading. Eighty-six families responded to the letter. Two groups of boys (23 experimental, 23 control) and girls (20 experimental, 20 control) were chosen by using a table of random numbers. The choice of experimental and control group was determined by flipping a coin. It was impossible to match students in each group for grade and sex because of the uneven response.

Families of the experimental group were sent a second letter redefining the purpose of the study, and a telephone call was made to each home that had a telephone to explain the role of the parents in the family reading session.

### Instrumentation

To measure the three hypotheses, instrumentation involved use of the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Form A, as the pretest. It was administered by the examiner in October, 1977. The posttest used to measure growth in reading ability was the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Form B. It was administered in May, 1978, by the examiner.

### Treatment

Treatment for the experimental group was in the form of a series of periodicals for youth. Different kinds of periodicals were supplied this target group in sufficient quantities to provide variety and motivation for reading. Each student in this group received four periodicals monthly. They included (in alphabetical order) Daisy, Highlights for Children, Ranger Rick's Wildlife Nature Magazine and Wee Wisdom. The families of the experimental group received a local newspaper, The Orlando Times, and used magazines (Newsweek, Ebcny, McCall's, Essence) from the examiner. The Fry Readability Formula was applied to the student materials to ascertain the reading difficulty of the materials. The magazines contained stories ranging from second to eighth grade reading levels. The examiner wrote exercises to accompany each magazine except Highlights for Children, which contained many reading activities which were used (see Appendix B). These exercises and activities served to introduce new vocabulary words, reinforce phonetic generalizations, and strengthen literal and inferential comprehension. The families were visited and telephoned once monthly to determine whether the materials were arriving as planned and were being read and discussed as scheduled. The study lasted for seven months, at the end of which time a posttest was administered to determine actual reading gains.

A group of students which did not receive the regular reading periodicals or any of the practice materials written

by the examiner was the control group. The examiner did give each child in the control group a magazine when the pretests were administered and two additional magazines during the seven months. The control group was not visited and no effort was made to encourage them to read at home.

### Treatment of the Data

The research design used was a 2 x 2 factorial design. There were two independent variables, sex and the use of reading materials. The reading achievement gain scores were the dependent variables.

To answer the research questions, both groups were given a reading pretest (Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Form A) and an intelligence test (Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test) to equate the groups. After seven months the groups were administered a parallel form of the reading test (Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Form B) and the raw scores were compared with the pretest.

Fisher's F ratio was used to test the significance of the difference between means. The alpha level was at the .05 level or below to test the hypotheses.

### Organization of the Report

Chapter II contains a review of related literature and research. Chapter III describes the data collected for the study. Chapter IV presents a discussion of the statistical

analyses of the data, and Chapter V contains a summary of the results and conclusions drawn from the investigation.



## CHAPTER II

### REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

The relationship between parent participation and the reading achievement of children is the focus of the review of literature. The empirical research relevant to the study is discussed under four topics. First, findings regarding socioeconomic levels and reading achievement are presented. Second, studies pertaining to parent participation in pre-school education programs are reported. Third, studies which investigate parent involvement with school-age children are pursued. Finally, some types of training programs that have been offered to parents are described. A critique and summary of the findings resulting from this review of literature is also offered.

#### Socioeconomic Levels and Reading Achievement

A plethora of research is available concerning socioeconomic levels and how they influence school achievement. The majority of studies conclude that socioeconomic class is the single most important factor in school achievement. Sheldon and Carrillo (1952) found that few good readers (10 out of 208) came from families where the fathers were employed as semiskilled or unskilled workers while larger percentages

were classified as average or poor readers. The reading achievement and the availability of reading material in low socioeconomic homes has been a subject of interest to educational researchers. Lamme and Olmstead (1976) queried the sources of reading materials among low income Follow Through second graders in Tampa, Florida. They found that only 55% of the children ever bring home story books from school and still fewer of this population are owners of a library card. Magazine and newspaper subscriptions for adults, though more substantial than for children, involved only slightly more than half of the households. Results of another study by the State of Florida (An analysis of the results of the Florida educational assessment, 1976) revealed that students who had access to reading materials in the home (books, newspapers, magazines, encyclopedias) surpassed students who lacked these materials as measured by state-wide assessment tests. Thorndike (1973) found large differences in the reading levels among populations of developing countries and the developed countries. He concluded that "the developed countries are in general able to provide an environment in which parents are educated, in which books and magazines are available" (p. 177).

A summary of the literature on educational achievement may be stated as follows: "The social class position of the parent stands in the same general rank order as the scholastic success and extent of participation of their children in the school system" (Schwebel, 1968, p. 133).

Parents of lower socioeconomic communities and the school often find themselves in conflict. There are many reasons for this schism between the school and community. Parents who feel alienated from the mainstream often consider the school as an enemy or another demeaning representative of the establishment. The children from these homes often lack motivation to achieve and often possess hostility or apathy toward academic success. Noted behavioral scientists (Scheinfield et al., 1970; Slaughter, 1970) agree that parents can improve a student's self-concept and that the home is a primary source of attitudes and values for the youngster. Therefore, one might expect that the home environment relates to and influences school achievement.

It has been only recently that the potentials for home involvement have been utilized. There is a paucity of research on how parents of low socioeconomic levels can directly affect reading achievement.

#### The Effects of Parent Participation in Preschool Programs

There are many parent intervention models represented in the literature. They are commonplace today but were unusual in the early 1960's. Gordon (1968) identified four levels of parent participation. They are (a) audience; bystander observer, (b) teacher of the child, (c) volunteer, and (d) trained worker.

In most studies the model of parental participation fits into the deficit hypothesis. The belief is that parents do

not know what is best for their children, and they need the benefit of expert knowledge from the school or other agencies. Some representative from the school (teacher, graduate student, parent trainer) instructed the mother in working more effectively with her child. "All studies imply a change in the value system of the parent" (Gordon, 1963, p. 27).

One of the first federally funded intervention programs, Project Headstart, was started in 1965. The goal was to intervene in lower class homes early enough to stop what was thought to be permanent retardation of cognitive and verbal development. One of the basic tenets of the Headstart philosophy was the involvement of parents in policy making decisions. Many projects were initiated around the country and an evaluative study was completed in 1969. The researchers from Westinghouse Learning Corporation, Ohio University (1973), found no appreciable difference in the children who attended Headstart from their peers who did not attend. The benefits of the program seemed to be short term only.

Most Headstart centers invited parents of Headstart children to work as teachers of their own children. Willmon (1969) involved parents of Headstart youngsters in the instructional program. She found highly active parent involvement does influence the academic success as measured by a readiness test. McCarthy (1968) utilized a home visit approach. Weekly visits were made to each home where she worked with each Headstart youngster and their parents. She loaned materials for one week (picture books, records, tapes, filmstrips) which

served to arouse interest in books and stories. She found there was a significant difference in the amount of gain in the language abilities of disadvantaged Headstart children whose parents participated in an individual home-visit program and those children whose parents did not participate in any type of parent involvement. Jacobs (1970) found contrasting results. She investigated prior, current, and active parent participation in Headstart programs. No differences emerged from the groups.

There were other attempts to intervene in instruction of children from lower class homes prior to 1965. Two of these projects deserve mention. The Ypsilanti-Perry Pre-School Project (Follow Through Program) involved 123 academically "high risk" children. The program was cognitively oriented and guided by Piaget's theory of cognitive development. The experimental group consisted of children who attended preschool and received weekly home visits. The control group did not attend preschool and experienced no intervention from the examiners other than the annual testing. The project was longitudinal in scope, and five years later "there was statistically significant and educationally improved differences between children who attended preschool and those who did not" (Weikart, 1975, p. 6).

The Klaus-Gray Preschool Program (DARCEE) used an experimental design involving four groups of children; two experimental and two control (Fein, 1974). The experimental curriculum was aimed at teaching language, number skills,

and attitudes. Experimental Group One received ten weeks of preschool for three summers, combined with three years of home visitor meetings. Experimental Group Two had a similar experience but it was limited to two years. Control Groups Three (Proximal) and Four (Distal) received no preschool or visitation and were used to measure spill-over effects of the experimental programs on the families in proximity to the project. A difference between the control and experimental groups on the Stanford Binet Intelligence Test was significant. There were no significant differences between control and experimental groups on the Metropolitan Achievement Test. Although the experimental group maintained its lead over the control group in first grade, it failed to sustain the initial gains by the end of the fourth grade.

An interesting finding concerning the experimental group emerged from the DARCEE study. The younger siblings of the nursery school groups obtained test scores that were significantly higher than those of the younger siblings of the control group. This incident of "vertical diffusion" gave evidence that the mother was utilizing knowledge gained in the project with her younger children. It was also found that children in the same neighborhood (Group Three) as the experimental group earned scores significantly higher from those children living sixty miles away (Group Four). The program's effectiveness was horizontal in nature also as other families in the community benefited from exposure to the experimental group.

The above programs differed in philosophy and structural procedures. The common threads were the chronological ages of the target populations and weekly home visits. Weikart and associates used educated professionals to train parents while the DARCEE project used paraprofessionals who were supervised on the job.

The cognitive benefits of Headstart and similar programs were disappointing, but two major benefits were in evidence.

Fein reviewed these early intervention programs and mentioned major health benefits to the children in the programs and attendant benefits to the parents of the children. Children participating in the programs exhibited improved attitudes and self concepts. The parents, in conjunction, gained a sense of worth and purpose. (Fein, 1974, p. 12)

Many, if not most, programs have embraced the passive role of parent participators. An alternative hypothesis is one that regards parents as knowing what they need as parents and advocates that parents and educators work as resources to each other. A very small number of studies adopted this theory. Gordon (1968) suggested that the self-fulfilling prophecy may be in operation. "When parents are expected to play vital roles, somehow they are able to make it" (p. 28).

Gordon's projects at the University of Florida were all-inclusive in that a parent educator entered the home to train children who were at an early age (three months to two years) and followed these individuals into the elementary school. A pilot project (Gordon, 1967), Parent Education Project, was initiated in 1966-67, to determine if "disadvantaged women could be selected, instructed and placed in other disadvantaged

homes to teach mothers ways to stimulate the perceptual, motor and verbal activities of their infants" (p. 59).

The second project (Gordon, 1973), Early Child Stimulation Through Parent Education, in 1969, used the same 150 families that participated in the Parent Education Project. The original group was split and assigned to a new control group. It was of interest to the examiners to test the effectiveness of two years versus one year of involvement. In addition, materials developed in the first Parent Education Project were subjected to further testing to determine their merit. Significant differences occurred between the control and experimental groups.

The success of the above programs led to the creation of the Home Learning Center in 1972 (Gordon, 1974). The project involved the establishment of learning centers in the backyards of homes of disadvantaged youngsters. Five children at a time spent four hours a week at these centers. Parents received a one-hour-a-week home visit from a parent educator. A major difference in this project was the use of disadvantaged paraprofessional workers as parent educators. These parent educators taught the mothers activities and exercises to be used at home. The Home Learning Center had "significant and last effects on the intellectual ability of the participants as measured by the Stanford Binet" (p. 72).

The use of television, toys, and household materials are some of the other innovations tried by researchers to help parents teach their preschool children. Karnes (1970)



provided toys for intellectual and language stimulation. The results indicated the following: "The mean Binet IQ of the children whose mothers worked with them at home was sixteen points above that of the children who had received no instruction" (p. 932). Levenstein (1971) expounded a similar theme. She sent toy demonstrators to work with parents and children twice a week for 23 weeks. Children participating in this program made an average gain of seventeen IQ points by the end of the second year program. Walton (1973) corroborated the above studies. Mothers in her preschool program showed an active interest in school-home relationships as evidenced by the regularity in which they accepted the role of home teacher. "Pupils in project upon entering first grade were better adjusted socially and performed better in verbal expression than classmates not in project" (p. 33). Walton concluded that parents can improve and facilitate school achievement.

#### Parent Involvement With School-Age Children

A majority of the research requiring parent involvement has been done in the preschool, early childhood centers, and there is a desperate need for additional research concerning parental help for older students. The following studies run the gamut in structure and imagination while attempting to involve parents in the education of their children.

Parental involvement within the guidance and structure of the school environment was the focus of the Florida

Education Program (Project Follow Through). The Florida Education Program (Gordon, 1969) was a home tutoring program designed to teach the mother a specific set of tasks. Home visits were made each week and lasted for an hour. The school groups involved in this project ranged from kindergarten to fourth grade. The parent educator worked in the school as a classroom aide and coordinated efforts between the home and the school. The parents utilized activities that had been planned and developed by the parent educator and the classroom teacher. The program was national in scope and involved 10 communities throughout the United States. The primary emphasis of the Florida Education Program was to involve parents in decision making and classroom volunteering and the researchers were not "overly concerned with the immediate payoffs of child performance on standardized achievement test" (Ware et al., 1976, p. 70). Comparison among the communities was difficult as the sites employed different techniques for measuring results. While many results were favorable to children in the Florida Education Program (Project Follow Through), a generalized conclusion concerning the academic achievement of Follow Through children was not possible. It (The Florida Follow Through Model) achieved the basic objectives and yielded valuable information concerning the utilization and motivation of low income parents as educators and volunteers.

Hayman et al. (1964) involved parents of children in the fifth grade in teaching their children Spanish, a subject that is

traditionally under the auspices of the school. Although the amount of education and formal training in Spanish that parents had was a factor, children whose parents participated performed significantly better on tests of language ability than children whose parents did not participate. He found interesting life style data on these parents also. "Eleven times as many volunteers as nonvolunteers subscribed to magazines especially for their children; six times as many volunteers reported reading news magazines" (p. 38).

McKinney (1975) trained parents to assist their third grade children in remedial reading and mathematic activities. The population was comprised of fifty parents in a tri-ethnic community in Miami, Florida. They participated in training for two hours weekly for fifteen weeks. Students in the experimental group showed a significant increase ( $< .001$ ) in achievement over the students in the control group.

The objective of the above studies was to implement the role of parents as home-school partners. They were generally successful and illustrated the fact that parents can successfully enhance their children's academic achievement when given necessary guidance and support.

The following studies are representative of studies that have involved parents with a minimum of school direction. Ryan (1964) compared the reading achievement of second graders and the degree of parent participation. Parents of the children in the experimental group were given a brochure, Reading

in the Home, and a Second Grade Bulletin (published four times during the school year) which provided information about the reading program and reinforced suggestions in the brochure. At the conclusion of the study the experimental group was significantly superior to the matched control group on word meaning. Ryan concluded that a planned program of parent participation was superior to incidental participation of parents and helped make reading an important leisure-time activity.

Niedermeyer (1970) investigated the effects of maintaining parent participation. He compared the results of a group using parent accountability (keeping records of home instruction) and a group using school-to-home feedback (sending home test, comments on papers, and others). No significant differences were found between the parent accountability or school-to-home feedback groups.

The results of the previous studies are conflicting, but they reveal the importance of including another influential variable for consideration. Sociologists identify the difference in value and attitudes as descriptors which separate middle class from lower class families.

The following investigators attempted to clarify the relationship between the home experience and the reading behavior of the student. Rankin (1967) investigated 64 third and fourth grade inner-city youth to determine the kinds of parental behavior that are related to school achievement. "In every case, the parents of high achievers reported more or

greater frequency of the behavior than did the low achievers' parents" (p. 2013). Data collected from mothers revealed differences in behavior between mothers of high and low achievers on 17 items out of 123. He identified some four behaviors that are related to the development of children's interest in reading. Mothers had children read aloud, children were asked to tell what stories they had read, mothers read to themselves at home, and parents read magazines at home. Durkin (1961) studied children who read before grade one. In assessing the literary background of these children, she found the following: (a) children were read to regularly at home and (b) parents had a high regard for reading. Parents also took time to answer children's questions.

Meachan (1969) studied three students who were not responding to remedial reading treatment. In each case, the parent of the same sex had dropped out of school before completing high school. She concluded that the parent was "subtly denigrating" school and actually reinforcing the poor performance of the student. She was successful in changing reading behavior by using praise, reassurance, and more recreational reading. Two students reached an acceptable level of reading. The third whose parent withdrew did not.

#### Types of Training Programs for Parents

Although there are numerous parent education programs reported in the literature, too few studies specifically described in their reports the activities and contents which

they found appropriate for parents. The studies reported in this section are more descriptive of their efforts of involving parents in the educational program.

Brazziel and Terrell (1961) reported a successful approach. They held two registration days prior to children's entry of first grade. Parents of the experimental group, the teacher, and the principal met to discuss first grade curriculum plans for readiness, the school's philosophy, and the purpose of school. The program also included 30 minutes of educational TV watched in the home by parents and children and meetings with the parents of the experimental group once a week. The experimental group scored at the 50th percentile, the national average, on the readiness test. Children in the three control groups scored at the 16th, 14th, and 15th percentile respectively.

Wise (1972) trained home instructors to tutor children. The objective of this program was to lend remedial assistance to low income inner-city Washington, D.C., youngsters. The home instructors were responsible for bringing children to the Parent Participation Reading Clinic (PPRC). The parent educator observed a reading specialist working with a child through a one-way mirror and learned some techniques of working with their children at home. A contract for practice work was written and reading materials and games were loaned to the parent instructors for home use. Wise encountered some difficulty when tuition rates began to rise and he suggested a home visit approach which was met with enthusiasm by the

mothers. Weekly visits were then made by staff members who made observations and recommendations for further educational presentations. As a group, the experimental children who participated in the PPRC program showed significant gain over the matched control children after an eight month re-evaluation using the California Test of Basic Skills. Wise expanded his concept of tutor and the home instructor was a parent, older sibling, and/or family member who took the responsibility of "home teacher."

McLaren (1965) conducted six weekly classes for parents of 36 first graders. The purpose was to inform parents of the importance of the home environment during initial reading instruction. Booklets and other references for parents of beginning readers were distributed and discussed at six weekly classes held for parents of the experimental group. The sessions were taught by the examiner and included such topics as the process of learning to read, readiness for reading, and individual differences among first grade students. The summary data indicated that "the total reading and achievement of first grade pupils whose parents participated in the experimental parent program was significantly superior to that of pupils whose parents did not attend information sessions" (p. 53).

Wade (1967) found an interesting slant in her study. Significant differences were found between the performance of the children with volunteer and nonvolunteer parents. The parents were solicited to help their children in grades

four to six with science. The experimental group was given scientific materials and kits to use at home. The control group received placebo booklets with general study hints. Volunteer parents were assigned to participation or non-participation groups. A significant difference occurred between the volunteer and nonvolunteer groups. She suggested that the critical variable under investigation was volunteering (self-selection) not participation.

Other studies germane to the present project included the phenomena of practice time. Hirst (1973) researched parents effectiveness in tutoring reading for thirty minutes daily. The total experimental group did not achieve significantly over the control group which received no tutoring. Freshour (1970) found apparent, but not significant, gains in favor of the experimental group who practiced oral reading ten minutes daily with their parents. Brzeinski (1964) worked with beginning first graders. Significant gains were made by those children who practiced oral reading thirty minutes daily as compared with children who did not practice. The best performance was exhibited by those who practiced more than thirty minutes and were read to more than sixty minutes daily. The phenomena of practice time in oral reading needs further investigation before generalizations can be made.

#### State of the Field: Summary

The studies in this review indicate the need for additional research to determine the effects of the home on reading



achievements. There are many types of intervention models which are based on sound theory. To name any as a single solution would be an oversimplification. Investigators have used all types of techniques to encourage mothers to attend group meetings. Mothers were provided free baby sitting, transportation, and supplies and, in some cases, they were paid fees by various researchers.

Some of the findings cited above were based on small samples and some studies had not been replicated. In some cases conclusions seemed exhortative and inspirational rather than theoretically grounded in research.

The studies reviewed the effects of crossed socioeconomic levels on reading. It is safe to generalize that parents from all socioeconomic levels can be trained to lend support to school programs. The influence of parent involvement on student achievement in lower socioeconomic homes is inconclusive. There is a need for continued support for parents in their roles as educators of their own and other children.

The studies reviewed indicated that among the correlates of reading success are socioeconomic level, parent involvement in reading programs, and availability of reading material in the home. It was the intent of this study to isolate the variable reading materials in the home with parent instruction for effective use of these materials. The availability of periodicals and books and a positive reading environment should be contributing factors in the reading achievement of low socioeconomic children.

### CHAPTER III

#### METHODOLOGY AND PROCEDURES

An experimental study of two groups was the method of investigation of this study. An experimental group and a control group were used. The experimental factor, availability of reading materials and family interaction in the reading process, was applied to the experimental group. The control group did not receive the reading materials and no attempts were made by the examiner to improve their reading. These children served as control for comparative purposes. The intervention was a home-reading project and pupils in both groups followed the same basic reading programs in school.

Information about the subjects, instrumentation, and data collecting procedures are presented in this chapter.

#### Selection of Subjects

Subjects for this study were fourth, fifth, and sixth grade students at three metropolitan elementary school in Orlando, Florida. The Title I Coordinator gave the examiner a list of schools which, in his judgment, contained populations of lower income children. All children had to meet certain criteria for selection. The major selection of students was based on standardized test scores which identified

students as disabled readers for their grade level. Each sample student had reading test scores in stanines 2 through 4 (low and low average) on the Comprehensive Test of Basic Skills. This group of names was checked with the free and reduced lunch records to ascertain the appropriateness of the label "lower socioeconomic." One hundred and eighty students met the above criteria of disabled reader and member of the low socioeconomic group.

Letters were sent to all households of the sample population ascertaining their willingness to participate in a project to improve their child's reading. A total number of 86 families responded to the invitational letter and their children comprised the experimental and control groups. Each student was then administered the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (Karlsen, Madden, & Gardner, 1976) and the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (Dunn, 1959). The 86 children were randomly assigned, using a table of random numbers, to an experimental group and a control group. The choice of experimental group and control group was determined by flipping a coin. The original experimental group contained 23 boys and 20 girls. The original control group numbered 23 boys and 20 girls. It was impossible to match students in each group for grade and sex because of the uneven response.

Natural attrition reduced the number of participating children from a total of 86 to a total of 74. The final groups contained 19 experimental boys, 17 experimental girls, 23 control boys, and 15 control girls. Although racial

background was not a factor in this study, the racial breakdown of the two groups was as follows: Caucasian boys in the study numbered 18, Black boys numbered 23, Caucasian girls numbered 10, Black girls numbered 22, and Orientals numbered 1 boy for a total of 74 subjects.

The description of the final sample is summarized as follows:

1. All subjects were students in grades four, five, and six.
2. All subjects were disabled readers for their grade level and members of the low socioeconomic group.
3. Intelligence quotients for all subjects were within the range of 63 to 109.
4. The parents of the subjects indicated a willingness to participate in a project to improve reading.

### Measuring Instruments

#### Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test

The Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (SDRT) was administered to the students of both groups. The authors of this test state, "SDRT was designed to provide particularly accurate assessment of low achieving pupils" (p. 5). This information was considered in selecting the test. The SDRT has four levels of diagnostic evaluation with two parallel forms (A and B) at each level. Split-half reliability coefficients (Kuder-Richardson Formula 20) were used to determine the internal consistency reliability of the SDRT

scores and are included in the manual. Information regarding criterion-related validity is offered in the manual also. The test is well planned and time limits are adequate as each child tested for this study was able to finish in the allotted time.

Form A was administered to the subjects in October, 1977. The SDRT measures auditory discrimination, phonetic and structural analysis, auditory vocabulary, and literal and inferential comprehension. The subtests Auditory Discrimination and Auditory Vocabulary were not given as they provide information about the pupil's vocabulary and auditory discrimination ability without requiring the pupil to read. The subtests administered included such skill objectives as identifying the same consonant sounds represented by the same spelling or two different spellings, identifying long and short vowels, vowel diphthongs, dividing two-syllable words according to structural analysis, and reading literally and inferentially.

A posttest, the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Form B, was administered in May, 1978, to make a postexperimental comparison of the reading achievement of the experimental and control groups. Mean scores from the pre- and post-testing appear in Chapter IV (see Table 1).

#### Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test

The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test (PPVT) is an individually administered intelligence test which provides a

measure of verbal intelligence through evaluating the subject's auditory vocabulary.

The test contains a series of 150 picture plates that become progressively more difficult. The student is asked to identify the picture that is associated with a word that the examiner reads aloud. The test can be administered to children from 2½ years to students 18 years of age. The manual supplies information on the standardization and reliability of the test. The coefficients for the alternate form reliabilities ranged from .67 at age 6 to .84 at age 18. PPVT has been correlated with the Stanford Binet Intelligence Test and the Weschler Intelligence Scale for Children in order to evaluate the claim of concurrent validity.

The range of intelligence scores was from 69 to 109 for the experimental group, and the range for the control group was from 63 to 107. The mean intelligence score for the experimental subjects was 84.05 and 86.60 for control subjects. Standard deviations for intelligence data were 10.25 and 10.38 for the experimental and control groups respectively. The range of IQ scores for this sample population was very wide.

#### Additional Materials and Procedures Used in the Study

The availability of reading materials was the critical variable being investigated in this study. The examiner solicited the aid of magazine publishers and found several

who were positive and generous in their response. Four nationally known youth periodicals were received by the experimental group each month for eight months. These magazines included (in alphabetical order) Daisy, Highlights for Children, Ranger Rick's Wildlife Nature Magazine, and Wee Wisdom. The examiner wrote exercises to accompany the magazines and provide guidance for the parents when they assisted their children. These activities also served to introduce new vocabulary words, reinforce phonetic generalizations, and strengthen literal and inferential comprehension. An example of the types of exercises sent are offered in Appendix B. In addition, the author sent home worksheets obtained from the Electric Company Guide Activity Book, Book 1 (Paige, 1974), that dealt specifically with phonetic and structural analysis. The page numbers of these worksheets and the skill objectives appear in Appendix C. The Fry Readability Formula was applied to the student materials to ascertain the reading difficulty of the materials. The magazines contained stories ranging from second to eighth grade reading levels.

Other materials sent into the homes included a local newspaper, The Orlando Times, and many used magazines that seemed appropriate for older family members. This was done to encourage a total reading environment and total family participation in reading.

A monthly home visit was made to each family in the experimental group. This was done to ascertain whether the

magazines arrived home as planned and were being read and discussed as scheduled. The visits were from 15 to 30 minutes in length. The examiner reviewed vocabulary on the exercise sheets and helped clear up any problems or questions that were encountered while attempting to complete the exercises. This project was essentially a home-reading improvement program which did not involve the direct participation of the school. The examiner did have to rely on the cooperation of the classroom teachers to distribute the magazines to the experimental children. Three magazines were sent to the home of the examiner for distribution and a fourth, Highlights for Children, was mailed directly to each child in the experimental group.

Chapter IV will present the statistical analysis of the data discussed in this chapter.



## CHAPTER IV

### STATISTICAL ANALYSIS OF THE DATA

Statistical analyses of the data in this study involved the use of multivariate analysis of variance (MANOVA). The test data were processed at Central Florida Regional Data Center. The program used is designated IRFINN and is one of a series of statistical programs (Finn, 1968).

In the analysis of test data, it was hypothesized that no real difference existed among the means of the experimental and control pupils with respect to scores on standardized reading tests. The multivariate analysis pertained to the entire set of dependent variables and the possibility of obtaining statistical significance by chance in computing several univariate analyses on the independent and dependent variables was minimized by using this process (Tatsuoka, 1971).

Intelligence is a correlate of reading and the analysis of covariance was performed as a single classification analysis to remove the effect of the covariate (intelligence) on the posttest variables. Analysis of covariance takes into account any measurable initial differences in the sample population and differences on the final test can be attributed to the experimental treatment. To determine if significant differences were present, F ratios were computed and the null hypotheses were tested at the .05 level of significance.

To determine if there was any difference in reading achievement between the experimental group and the control group, and to determine if there was any difference in the reading achievement of boys and girls in the two groups, the model in Figure 1 was used.

	Experimental Boys	Experimental Girls	Control Boys	Control Girls
(L0)	+1	+1	+1	+1
(L1)	+1	+1	-1	-1
(L2)	+1	-1	+1	-1
(L3)	+1	-1	-1	+1

Figure 1. Model used for multivariate analysis of variance.

It may be observed that this design matrix yields results which are equivalent to testing main effects and interaction in a 2 x 2 factorial design. The analysis was carried out according to a single degree of freedom planned contrasts. The contrasts of interest to this study are (L1), (L2), and (L3). The experimental/control comparison was represented by (L1), the boy/girl comparison was represented by (L2), and the possible existence of an interaction between the two independent variables was represented by (L3).

The dependent measures for the treatment groups were analyzed using multivariate analysis of variance. The model for this procedure is  $X = A\epsilon + E$  where  $X$  is the matrix of

cell means,  $A$  is an appropriate design matrix,  $\xi$  is the matrix of parameters to be tested and  $E$  is the matrix of error variates. A multivariate  $F$  ratio based on Wilks Lambda Criterion was computed for the equality of mean vectors for each planned contrast (Bock, 1963).

In this study the intelligence score was treated as a covariate in that its regression estimates of the dependent measures were used as criterion measures. Table 1 presents the means of the pretest, the posttest means, the pretest adjusted means, the posttest adjusted means and gains of both measures. The adjusted means of the reading test were those arrived at as a result of the covariance analysis, where the effects due to difference in the pretest intelligence scores were removed or adjusted. The multivariate significance tests discussed in the remainder of this chapter refer to adjusted mean scores. These scores were adjusted upwards and downwards and represent the best possible estimates as to what the groups would have actually obtained if the groups had in fact been equal initially (Huck et al., 1974, p. 137).

Examination of the raw score gains and the adjusted score gains reveals that the experimental group surpassed the control group on all measures except on the subtest of Literal Comprehension. The pretest scores on this subtest (Literal Comprehension) were higher than the control group on this subtest and less progress was exhibited by the experimental group on the posttest measure.

Table 1  
Raw Score Means and Adjusted Means of Reading Scores  
(SDRT A & B)

Group	Raw Score Means		Gain	Adjusted Means		
	Pretest	Posttest		Pretest	Posttest	Gain
Phonics						
EXP B	14.79	20.89	+6.11	13.96	21.93	+7.97
EXP G	16.76	20.65	+3.88	15.84	20.82	+4.98
CON B	18.13	20.26	+2.13	18.99	20.02	+1.03
CON G	16.13	18.66	+2.53	16.90	17.55	+0.65
Structural Analysis						
EXP B	38.31	50.58	+12.27	38.85	54.36	+15.51
EXP G	40.53	47.82	+7.29	40.29	49.48	+9.19
CON B	41.13	44.74	+3.61	41.26	42.93	+1.67
CON G	36.73	42.93	+6.20	36.09	39.00	+2.91
Literal Comprehension						
EXP B	23.26	24.89	+1.63	24.61	26.01	+1.40

EXP G	24.12	25.94	+1.82	26.22	27.82	+1.60
CON B	20.30	22.43	+2.13	18.38	20.73	+2.35
CON G	20.73	22.79	+2.06	19.57	21.85	+2.01

Inferential Comprehension

EXP B	19.79	22.16	+2.37	20.83	23.11	+2.28
EXP G	18.29	22.82	+4.53	18.60	24.52	+5.92
CON B	17.96	19.96	+2.01	17.58	18.41	+0.93
CON G	17.73	20.39	+2.66	16.62	19.59	+2.97

### Findings for the Hypotheses

Three null hypotheses were tested. Each hypothesis, beginning with Hypothesis 3, will be stated and results presented.

Hypothesis 3. There is no significant mean interaction relative to sex and utilization of reading materials as measured by the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Forms A and B.

This hypothesis was supported by the data. The adjusted post-test means of the experimental and control groups did not differ significantly. Table 2 shows the interaction relative to sex and utilization of reading materials.

Table 2

Multivariate and Univariate Test of Mean Equality for  
Interaction Relative to Sex and Utilization of  
Reading Materials

Variable	Mean Square	Univariate $F$	P
1. Phonics	70.9717	2.0030	0.1610
2. Struct Ana	199.3398	2.3620	0.1289
3. Lit Comp	0.8674	0.0270	0.8701
4. Inf Comp	7.1560	0.2605	0.6115
5. Phonics	8.2537	0.2098	0.6484
6. Struct Ana	3.9336	0.0411	0.8399
7. Lit Comp	2.1311	0.1067	0.7449
8. Inf Comp	0.2642	0.0119	0.9135

The multivariate  $F$  value for those mean vector differences failed to yield a significant probability value,  $F(8,62) = 1.31$ ,  $p > .05$ . The hypothesis stating that there is no

significant mean interaction relative to sex and utilization of reading materials was accepted.

Hypothesis 2. There is no significant mean difference between the sexes in the experimental group and the amount of reading gains as measured by the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Forms A and B.

This hypothesis was supported. Table 3 presents the multivariate test of mean equality between the sexes.

Table 3  
Multivariate and Univariate Test of Mean Equality  
Between Sexes

Variable	Mean Square	Univariate $F$	P
1. Phonics	0.1272	0.0036	0.9524
2. Struct Ana	10.5977	0.1256	0.7242
3. Lit Comp	10.4131	0.3237	0.5713
4. Inf Comp	9.5957	0.3493	0.5565
5. Phonics	13.4617	0.3422	0.5605
6. Struct Ana	80.9531	0.8467	0.3607
7. Lit Comp	10.3445	0.5181	0.4741
8. Inf Comp	9.8440	0.4432	0.5079

The multivariate  $F$  value for those mean vector differences failed to yield a significant probability value,  $F(8,62) = 0.9583$ ,  $p > .05$ . The hypothesis stating that there is no significant mean difference between sexes in the experimental group and the amount of reading gains was accepted.

Hypothesis 1. There is no significant mean difference in the reading gains of an experimental group of low socioeconomic disabled readers who have

daily family reading periods using selected children's periodicals and a similar control group who do not have daily family reading periods using selected children's periodicals as measured by the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Forms A and B.

This hypothesis was not accepted. The adjusted means of the experimental group were significantly higher than those of the control group on the dependent variables. Table 4 presents the F ratios obtained from the multivariate analysis of variance.

Table 4

Multivariate and Univariate Test of Mean Equality for  
Experimental and Control Groups Using Selected  
Children's Periodicals

Variable	Mean Square	Univariate <u>F</u>	P
1. Phonics	52.0281	1.4721	0.2292
2. Struct Ana	2.3320	0.0276	0.8685
3. Lit Comp	202.3975	6.2913	0.0145
4. Inf Comp	33.4292	1.2168	0.2738
5. Phonics	26.6851	0.6783	0.4131
6. Struct Ana	534.8438	5.5941	0.0209
7. Lit Comp	150.5427	7.5394	0.0077
8. Inf Comp	119.0610	5.3602	0.0236

The multivariate F yielded a significant probability value,  $\underline{F}(8,62) = 2.4137, p < .05$ . The hypothesis stating that there would be no significant difference in the reading gains of an experimental group of low socioeconomic disabled readers who have daily family reading periods using selected children's



periodicals and a similar control group who do not have daily family reading periods using selected children's periodicals was not accepted.

Further analysis of the data revealed that certain dependent variables reached levels of significance whereas other dependent variables failed to reach levels of significance. Table 5 presents the variables that yielded a significant probability value.

Table 5  
Univariate F Test of Equality Between the  
Dependent Variables

Variable	Univariate <u>F</u>	P
1. Phonics	1.4721	0.2292
2. Struct Ana	0.0276	0.8685
3. Lit Comp	6.2913	0.0145*
4. Inf Comp	1.2168	0.2738
5. Phonics	0.6783	0.4131
6. Struct Ana	5.5941	0.0209*
7. Lit Comp	7.5394	0.0077*
8. Inf Comp	5.3602	0.0236

\* $p < .05$

The variables listed above were considered dependent variables and were used as pre- and posttest measures for reading achievement. The variables numbered 1 through 4 represent pretest measures and variables numbered 5 through 8

represent posttest measures. Close observation revealed Literal Comprehension to be significant as a pretest measure. The experimental and control groups differed initially in Literal Comprehension on the pretest ( $p = .0145, < .05$ ). It was no surprise then to find significant differences between the experimental and control groups on the posttest measures of Literal Comprehension ( $p = .0077 < .05$ ). Further observation of the pretest means (raw and adjusted) in Table 1 reveals the experimental group to be slightly better readers than the control group when they are asked to read material for literal meanings. The use of the reading materials and the daily practice sessions did not significantly effect the Literal Comprehension score of the experimental students. It is interesting to note that the raw and adjusted gain scores (Table 1) favor the control group in the area of Literal Comprehension.

The results of the analyses showed the subtest measuring Structural Analysis failed to reach levels of significance on the pretest ( $p = .8685, > .05$ ). The posttest scores on this subtest (Structural Analysis) yielded significant probability values ( $p = .0209, < .05$ ). Table 1 lists the pre- and posttest means and gain scores. The experimental group substantially outperformed the control group in this subtest.

The pretest means on the subtest for Inferential Comprehension failed to yield a significant difference between the experimental and control group ( $p = .2738, > .05$ ). The subtest scores for Inferential Comprehension were significant for the two groups on the posttest measure ( $p = .0236, < .05$ ).

### Discussion of These Findings

The data analysis comparing the Inferential Comprehension subtests revealed no initial significant differences between the experimental and control groups. The posttest scores revealed significant differences between the experimental and control groups with the experimental girls exhibiting the most improvement or gain (see Table 1). The ability to read inferentially consists of being able to read between the lines, draw conclusions about what was read, make generalizations, and being able to predict outcomes. One of the interesting questions of the study might be, What specifically contributed to the significant difference between the experimental and control groups in the area of Inferential Comprehension? It might be suggested that the experimental group benefited from answering inferential type questions on the activities and exercises written by the examiner to accompany the reading materials (see Appendix B). The magazines used by the experimental group contained fiction, nonfiction, poetry, puzzles, and other activities that were appropriate and appealing to children. The examiner wrote comprehension questions for many of the stories to give the students and their parents some guidance as to what might have been important in the story. The experimental group who completed many of these exercises outperformed the control group on this subtest (Inferential Comprehension).

The reading subtest Structural Analysis revealed no significant values as a pretest measure. The raw and adjusted

means for the control boys on Structural Analysis was initially higher than all the other groups. Posttest data revealed a significant difference between the experimental and control groups. The experimental boys showed more improvement than the experimental girls on the posttest measures. The posttest gain of the experimental boys in Structural Analysis was the largest gain of all the measures reported in the data (see Table 1). It is suggested as above that the exercises distributed to the experimental group, particularly the work sheets from the Electric Company Guide Activity Book, Book 1, might have contributed to this significant difference between groups. The sheets selected had phonetic and structural analysis as major skill objectives (see Appendix C).

The subjects of the study were randomly assigned to the control and experimental groups , and the initial differences between groups were adjusted by using a covariate analysis of the intelligence scores. It may be suggested in terms of these general criteria that the posttest gain scores can be attributed to the special treatment given to the experimental group.

#### Summary of the Findings

The multivariate F ratios indicated that both hypotheses 2 and 3 could be accepted. The null hypotheses that there were no significant mean differences between the sexes regarding reading achievement and there were no significant mean differences relative to sex and utilization of reading materials must be accepted.

A significant multivariate F ratio showed that hypothesis 1 could not be accepted. The experimental group made greater gains than the control group in general overall reading achievement. Therefore, the hypothesis that low socioeconomic disabled readers would not profit from participating in daily family reading periods and using selected children's periodicals was not accepted.

## CHAPTER V

### SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

The purpose of this study was to determine whether the availability of selected children's periodicals and daily family reading periods would significantly improve the reading performance of low socioeconomic students who were disabled readers.

The investigation sought to answer the following questions: (a) would there be a difference in reading achievement between boys and girls in the sample population? and (b) would low socioeconomic parents be successful in aiding their children to improve their reading?

The 86 subjects who participated in the study were fourth, fifth, and sixth graders who were identified as disabled readers for their grade level by a standardized reading test. These students were also members of the low socioeconomic segment of the populace as they all met government criteria for free or reduced school lunches. The groups were chosen at random and the experimental group received selected children's periodicals and other materials as the treatment. These reading materials were received by the experimental group for a period of seven months. The control group received no reading materials and no attempt was made by

the examiner to improve reading. The Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test (Forms A and B) was administered to the experimental and control groups before and after completion of the experimental treatment. These tests measured ability to recognize words or word parts and ability to comprehend sentences and paragraphs. The Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test was administered to each subject during the experiment. This test yielded a receptive language aptitude for each child. The tests were administered and hand scored by the examiner and her assistants.

The level of reading was measured by comparing the raw scores obtained on the pre- and posttest instruments. Richards (1975) found "sample gain scores measure the true situation about as accurately as other change estimates" (p. 299). The test data were analyzed statistically using a multivariate analysis of variance to determine whether or not there were any significant differences in reading achievement between the experimental and control groups. The intelligence quotient scores obtained from the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test were covaried to allow for initial differences in the sample population.

Three hypotheses were tested and the findings for each are summarized.

Hypothesis 1. There is no significant mean difference in the reading gains of an experimental group of low socioeconomic disabled readers who have daily family reading periods using selected children's periodicals and a similar control group who do not have daily family reading periods using selected children's periodicals as measured by the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Forms A and B.

The means of the experimental group were significantly different from a similar control group. Empirical support for Hypothesis 1 suggests that a group of low socioeconomic disabled readers can benefit from using selected children's periodicals and participating in daily family reading periods. Experimental intervention was observed to exert a greater influence on the areas of structural analysis, literal comprehension, and inferential comprehension as measured by the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Forms A and B.

Hypothesis 2. There is no significant mean difference between the sexes in the experimental group and the amount of reading gains as measured by the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Forms A and B.

This hypothesis was accepted. Examination of the data revealed no significant differences between the sexes and the amount of reading gain. A review of the raw score means indicates that the boys of both groups performed slightly better than the girls of both groups on all measures except the subtests which measured Literal Comprehension and Inferential Comprehension.

Hypothesis 3. There is no significant mean interaction relative to sex and utilization of reading materials as measured by the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Forms A and B.

This hypothesis was accepted. The probability of occurrence connected with this hypothesis was .2534. The results of this analysis may be taken to mean that roughly twenty-five times out of one hundred the observed differences could have occurred by chance. This is usually interpreted to mean that the alpha rate is too great ( .05) for the null hypothesis to be rejected; thus, the null hypothesis was accepted.



## Representative Case Studies and Their Implications

The review of related literature (see Chapter II) discussed in a cursory manner some of the obstacles that had to be overcome when examiners attempted to intervene in lower class homes (Jacobs, 1970; Wise, 1972). Although positive results were obtained in this study, the examiner had to overcome many obstacles to obtain the limited success. Three case histories are presented to demonstrate the nature of the environmental circumstances thought to contribute negatively to the experimental treatment and should be given consideration when looking at the results of the study.

### Case Study 1

Sally (experimental group member) is an example of a child from a home in which the deleterious effects of poverty are evident.

Sally, a Caucasian girl of nine years was the oldest child in a family of three children. The child's father had severely beaten the mother and Sally's parents were separated. At the time of initial contact, Sally's family had no electricity and the food stamps and small welfare income were almost depleted. The mother reported to the author that the welfare people were out to get her because they thought she was making extra money selling macrame items. She had been reported by a neighbor for selling things along the roadside. The family lived in a mobile home and had been without electricity for nine months. The refrigerator was hooked up by

an extension cord to the trailer next door. This mother had a futile attitude about life but tried to help her children have a better life. She had no car or transportation and the reading materials the examiner provided were welcomed. Sally's middle brother was in the second grade, and he was also having difficulty learning to read. The mother thought that he was intelligent and would settle down eventually. She was very critical of the school. She helped Sally with the materials because she said she wanted her to have a better chance in life than she did. Sally's test scores on the SDRT were as follows:

	<u>Pretest</u>	<u>Posttest</u>
Phonics	30	29
Structural Analysis	54	58
Literal Comprehension	28	29
Inferential Comprehension	23	27

Sally improved slightly. The examiner felt that she began to adopt some of her mother's attitude of futility. It was also somewhat difficult to read with one lamp as the only source of light in the house.

### Case Study 2

Tommy (experimental group member) is an example of a child from a home in which parental guidance and cooperation is evident.

Tommy was the younger of two children residing in the home with a maternal grandmother. He was a nine-year-old Black boy. The examiner had some difficulty finding his home

initially, and the family did not have a telephone in service. The author finally found the house after two months had gone by and was disappointed to see that Tommy had not been doing any reading at home. His grandmother did not fully understand the nature of the project and her role in assisting him to improve his reading. The author explained the purpose of the study and the grandmother replied, "You mean that's all he has to do is read them books? You'll never come here again and he won't have the work." She mentioned that she could not help him with the reading but would see to it that his older sister in junior high school helped him. She was true to her word and Tommy met the author at the door with his arms full from that day on. Tommy's reading scores on the SDRT were as follows:

	<u>Pretest</u>	<u>Posttest</u>
Phonics	15	26
Structural Analysis	49	56
Literal Comprehension	28	29
Inferential Comprehension	26	29

### Case Study 3

George is an example of a child from an impoverished home who is fighting the odds to survive.

George is an 11-year-old Black boy who was in the sixth grade. He lived with his 19-year-old guardian and her parents. He was abandoned at three weeks by his natural mother and his guardian took him in to live with her family. The home is pleasant but very overcrowded as the guardian has five children of her own.

He is an intelligent boy who had the highest intelligence quotient (IQ) of all the children tested using the Peabody Picture Vocabulary Test. George was pleased to get the special help and attention from the examiner but often lapsed into periods of moodiness and would not answer questions. He had a volatile temper and was suspended from school during the last two weeks for fighting. He was one of the few children who did a great job on the practice exercises, and the author was puzzled as to why his posttest scores were not higher. This home was devoid of reading materials and everything the examiner bought for the family was welcomed. George's test scores on the SDRT were as follows:

	<u>Pretest</u>	<u>Posttest</u>
Phonics	09	21
Structural Analysis	44	58
Literal Comprehension	30	29
Inferential Comprehension	26	25

#### Additional Observations

The author hoped to get cooperation from all the households involved in the study. Many individual situations interfered with parents being able to cooperate with the examiner as extensively as planned. A majority of the households were matriarchical. These females generally had several children and worked outside the home to support the family. Many mothers reported to the examiner that it was difficult to sit down and work with one child after a day's work. They would ask if the work had been completed and the child's

answer was accepted without question. Several children came from troubled homes in which the mothers were moving constantly to escape their husbands. Two such moves occurred during the duration of the study but the examiner was fortunate and the experimental families returned to the same neighborhood.

The author was able to make many observations when making home visits. While no attempt was made to ascertain the educational level or background of the parents, much information of this type came out in informal conversation. After some of the parents were familiar with the examiner, they mentioned the fact that they wanted to return to school or had returned to school to complete a GED certificate. They realized how important reading was to their lives. Children inadvertently told the approximate educational level of their parents. One youngster in the experimental group tried to explain why she had not read a particular magazine supplied by the examiner. "My mother didn't even know some of the words in that book." The examiner was not able to find out with assurity that parents who did not help their children, did not do so because they were unable to read the materials themselves.

Several of the children were repeating a grade and had very negative attitudes concerning reading. Very few of the children had quiet places to read, study, or just to call their own. A few of the younger siblings would destroy the materials if they were left lying around.

The poverty was awesome in a few cases and the author realized that the attempt to put reading in a vacuum was an

impossible task. It was obvious that family background factors, e.g. socioeconomic status, parent's expectations for the child, family structure play an important role in a child's academic achievement.

### Conclusions

On the basis of the results obtained in this investigation, the following conclusions are warranted:

1. Low socioeconomic students can be aided to improve their reading by making reading materials available with guidance.
2. Low socioeconomic parents can be responsive to suggestions about how to help their children improve reading.
3. The positive effects of providing reading materials seem to be greater in the areas of structural analysis and inferential comprehension as measured by the Stanford Diagnostic Reading Test, Forms A and B.

### Suggestions for Further Research

The results of this study indicate the desirability of further research to explain what is currently known and believed about the relationship of the home literary environment and reading behavior.

1. Future studies of this nature would be enhanced if the individual classroom teacher were actively involved in the support and encouragement of a home reading program. The

children would benefit from the support of another significantly important adult. This study might be replicated involving the classroom teacher in a closer working relationship with the examiner.

2. The study was limited by the number and type of magazine used. Future studies might employ other materials and magazines with a similar population or replicate this study using different children's magazines.

3. A follow-up on the younger siblings of the experimental group would be in order to see if parents were utilizing information and techniques to help a younger child with reading.

4. The interval of time that elapsed between home visits was too long. Time and personnel limitations restricted the effectiveness of this study. A future research study of this type might increase the number of people responsible for making home visits and investigate the feasibility of weekly home visits.

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APPENDIX A  
LETTERS TO PARENTS

Adrienne M. Perry      623 Applewood Avenue      Altamonte Springs,  
Florida

August 10, 1977

Parents of \_\_\_\_\_,

I am a graduate student at the University of Florida working on a project to help children improve their reading.

This letter is an invitation to participate in the project in which I will provide material (free of charge) to assist you in helping your child become a better reader. In addition, you'll receive literature on how to help your child in reading and special materials from time to time.

If you are interested in becoming a part of this effort to help your child improve his/her reading, please answer the questions at the bottom of this letter and return within the next two weeks. If you agree to participate in the project, it will be necessary for you\* to work 15 - 20 minutes a day with your child.

A self-addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Adrienne M. Perry

\*Any family member can work with the child.

Your name \_\_\_\_\_ Address \_\_\_\_\_

Your child's name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

CHECK ONE:

Yes      No

- ☐ ☐ 1) My child will be at his/her present school six months.
- ☐ ☐ 2) I am willing to work with my child for at least 15 - 20 minutes daily.
- ☐ ☐ 3) I would not mind a telephone call or home visit to explain the purpose of the study or to see how things are going.
- ☐ ☐ 4) I understand that my child may not receive all of the special materials that will be distributed.
- ☐ ☐ 5) I give permission for my child to be tested prior to receiving reading help and after the project has ended.

Signed \_\_\_\_\_

623 Applewood Avenue  
Altamonte Springs, FL 32701  
October 13, 1977

Dear

A few short weeks ago you sent back a letter agreeing to participate in a project to help your child's reading. The time has come to get started.

\_\_\_\_\_ has been selected to be in the experimental group and will receive some special materials. Please keep this information about the special materials secret and ask your child not to discuss it with anyone.

The first package of materials will be coming next week. I will deliver them to the school. Please assist your child when the materials arrive. Thank you.

Sincerely yours,

Adrienne Perry

623 Applewood Avenue  
Altamonte Springs, FL 32701  
October 25, 1977

Dear Parents,

I hope you are encouraging your child to do the exercises that accompany the reading materials. I enjoy writing them and I hope the students enjoy reading them. Please keep the worksheets in the envelope I have provided. I'll be visiting each home and picking them up later.

Some publications will be mailed directly to your home. Please look for Highlights for Children and The Orlando Times newspaper. The newspaper is for your family enjoyment and is free of charge. You'll find my column in the newspaper with additional suggestions on helping your child in school.

Please keep the time schedule I have enclosed on a daily basis. I would like to see if the amount of time spent practicing will make a difference.

I hope you enjoy the materials.

Sincerely,

Adrienne Perry



623 Applewood Avenue  
 Altamonte Springs, FL 32701  
 November 15, 1977

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I hope that the reading study sessions between you and \_\_\_\_\_ are going well. I am unable to reach you by phone and I would appreciate your comments to the questions below.

- 1) The reading materials is a) too easy, b) too hard, c) just right.
- 2) My child can use more help with a) meanings of words, b) letter sounds, c) comprehension.
- 3) My child is enjoying the magazines. Yes No  
 Favorite one \_\_\_\_\_
- 4) Other Comments \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_

I plan to visit each family during the last week of November. Please indicate when would be the best time to visit. I plan to come during the evenings and on the weekend. I need to give each child in the study a ten minute vocabulary test. I appreciate your cooperation. Please let me know if I can be of more assistance. You may reach me at 862-0441 after 5 p.m., and at 323-1450, Ext. 409 during the day.

Sincerely,

Adrienne Perry

Please indicate a time for the visit below.

	Nov. 28	Nov. 30	Dec. 1	Dec. 2	Dec. 3	Dec. 4
	Mon.	Wed.	Thurs.	Fri.	Sat.	Sun.
Time:	5-8	5-8	5-8	5-8	11-4	2-6

The visit should last approximately 20 minutes. I will let you know exactly when you can expect me.

623 Applewood Avenue  
Altamonte Springs, Florida  
February 2, 1978

Dear

I hope \_\_\_\_\_ is enjoying the  
magazines and is reading something every night.

Please encourage her/him to read daily as practice  
really does make perfect.

I will be making home visits next week, Mon., (Feb. 6) -  
to Friday (Feb. 10). I will want to review some of the  
reading practice sheets and see how things are going in  
general.

I will be arriving between 4 p.m. and 8 p.m. The  
visit should take 10 - 15 minutes. Thank you for your  
cooperation.

Sincerely,

Adrienne Perry

## APPENDIX B

### EXAMPLES OF EXERCISES SENT TO THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

I hope you enjoyed reading Ranger Rick's Nature Magazine (Oct. 1977). The magazine has beautiful pictures and will help you do well in Science also. Read the following stories by yourself and answer the questions I have written for you. Get help from your Mom if you need it.

#### Midnight Munchers - p. 17 - 21

##### New Words

dormouse	nature	ancient	hedges
dormice	rodents	hibernate	venture
edible	muncher	several	predators
delicious	rascal	orchards	series

Answer these questions - Write out your answers.

- a) What two things do dormice like to do best? (p. 19)
- b) What does an animal do when it hibernates? (p.19, 20)
- c) Why can't you find a dormouse in your backyard? (p. 19)
- d) How long does it take a baby dormouse to be on its own? (p. 20, 21)

- e) Why did people call some dormice edible dormice? (p. 20)
- f) What is a predator? Look this word up in a dictionary if you aren't sure. (p. 20)
- g) Name three types of problems dormouse might cause. (p. 20)
- h) What world series contest would the dormouse win? (p. 19)

The story, "Midnight Munchers" contains many compound words.

I'll supply one half. Can you find the other half?

- |                |               |
|----------------|---------------|
| a. mid_____    | h. wood_____  |
| b. wonder_____ | i. under_____ |
| c. for_____    | j. snow_____  |
| d. in_____     | k. corn_____  |
| e. black_____  | l. over_____  |
| f. hair_____   | m. bed_____   |
| g. on_____     |               |

What is a compound word? Can you write 5 more of your own?

\_\_\_\_\_

Ask your Mom to read the following stories to you.

- 1) Look What I Found" (p. 6-9)

Questions to discuss:

- a) What was Jan's hobby? How did he begin this hobby?
- b) What are nature's scavengers?

c) Where did Jan live?

d) Why is it important to clean the skull carefully?

2) "Timeless Tortoise"(p. 30-34)

Questions to discuss:

a) Who first discovered the giant tortoises?

b) What were the tortoises primarily used for? Why?

c) What use did they have later on?

d) What government protected the giant tortoise? Why?

e) Is a tortoise a reptile? Why or why not?

Read "Ring-Around Runner" (p. 12 & 13)

New Words

canyon	stuffing	coneflower	prey
New Mexico	collared	dinosaur	
vulture	lizard	gullies	

Questions - Write your answers out.

a) What is another name for a burrow? (p. 12)

b) A vulture is a \_\_\_\_\_. (p. 12)

c) Why is the lizard called a collared lizard? (p. 12)

- d) Why is New Mexico a good home for the lizard?
- e) The word alert means \_\_\_\_\_. (p. 12)
- f) Who is the lizard's worst enemy? (p. 13)
- g) How does the lizard get away from the road runner? (p. 13)
- h) What amazing thing happens to a lizard's tail? (p. 13)
- i) The word prey means \_\_\_\_\_.  
Look it up if you're not sure. (p. 13)

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Happy New Year! I hope you had a happy holiday and a good vacation. You will be receiving some nice materials in 1978 and I hope you are still reading something every night.

Here is a copy of Wee Wisdom (Jan. 1978). Read the stories and do the exercises I have written to go with it.

The New Year is the time for resolutions. The word resolution comes from the word resolve. To resolve to do something is to make a promise to do something or change. What changes or resolutions have you made for the new year? Help Jim unscramble his resolutions on p. 30. (Answers on p. 31.) Look on the back cover also. Pixi Pete and Pixi Polly ask you to help them with a resolution.

Read "Weebo's Replacement" (p. 4-8)

#### New Words

majesty (maj-es-ty)	adviser (ad-vi-ser)	scare (skars)
besieged (be-siege)	necessary (nec-es-sar-y)	
announced (an-nounce)	shuffled (shuf-fle)	

- 1) Why was Weebo retiring? (p. 5, see picture)
- 2) What is the job of an adviser?
- 3) What person in our country has a group of advisers that help him run the country?
- 4) How many people did Weebo finally consider for the job? (p. 7)

- 5) What did Ober consider as important to a wise man? (p. 7)
- 6) How did Demar explain the scroll? (p. 8)
- 7) Why did Weebo choose Demar as the new chief adviser?  
(p. 8)

This story is full of conversation between people. When a writer wants to show someone speaking, he uses these marks

" " - called quotation marks.

Read this short conversation -

The policeman said, "We caught the masked man." The witness replied, "You made a mistake. The robber was a masked woman."

Write a short conversation between two people. Be sure to use quotation marks to show what is being said.

This story has some new vocabulary words. Did you figure out what they meant?

- 1) What is a scroll?
- 2) "Weebo found himself besieged by hundreds of young men."  
What does to be besieged mean?
- 3) "Weebo muttered, shaking his head." What is another word for muttered?



Read "The Day They Took Our TV Away" (p. 9-11)

- 1) How did Jenny feel about the television set? (p. 9)
- 2) How would you feel if you couldn't watch television for a week?
- 3) How did the family spend the time?
- 4) List some things you might do to entertain yourself instead of viewing television.
- 5) What are some of your favorite television programs?

Ask your Mom or Dad to review words from "Aunt Rosemary's Visit" with you. (p. 36-40)

Match Column A to Column B

- |                    |                       |
|--------------------|-----------------------|
| (a) regular        | (1) instrument        |
| (b) replied        | (2) live through      |
| (c) Senior Citizen | (3) smell             |
| (d) harmonica      | (4) usual             |
| (e) survive        | (5) spots on the face |
| (f) scented        | (6) older person      |
| (g) freckles       | (7) answered          |
| (h) luggage        | (8) suitcases         |
| (i) habit          | (9) usual behavior    |

Be sure to have some fun with the puzzle pages 29-31.  
See you at the end of this month.

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Here is a copy of Daisy (Jan. 1978). Ask your Mom, Dad, Brother, or Sister to help you with words that are a little hard for you. Be sure to write the answers to the questions as the practice will help your writing and spelling also.

Is that a monster on the cover? The children don't seem to be afraid. Read pp. 20-22 to find out more about the cover.

"The Minnesota Answer"

New Words - Pronounce them aloud.

Minnesota (Min-ne-sō-ta)      participants (par-tic-i-pants)

Carnival (Car-ni-val)      amateurs (am-a-teurs)

habit (hab-it)      spectators (spec-ta-tors)

habitation (hab-i-ta-tion)      tournament (tour-na-ment)

Read--

amid = among      They lived amid the winter cold and snow.

carnival = big party      St. Paul had a winter carnival.

habitation = place to live      A desert is not fit for habitation.

amateur = beginner      The amateur just started skating.

spectators = people who look      The spectators watched the game.

participant = people who take part in      They were participants in the carnival.

tournament = contest      The ski tournament was held far out in the country.

\*wind chill factor = blowing winds made it seem colder than it actually was.

Discuss these questions with your helper.

- 1) Have you ever played in snow? (People in the North have received a lot of snow this winter. Minnesota is in the North.)
- 2) People in Minnesota have fun in the snow. Did you see the snow dragon on top of p. 20?
- 3) How long have they been holding the carnival?
- 4) Why did they hold the carnival inside?
- 5) What is the monster on the cover?
- 6) What are some of the outdoor games that are played?
- 7) How long does the carnival last?
- 8) What was the most unusual thing you read about in this story?

Read "Weather-Or Not," p. 2, and surprise your teacher with how much you know about weather and climate. What is the difference between the two words weather and climate?

Do the Sea World Search on p. 13 and then read "Ocean Exploration" on pp. 9-12.

- 1) Have you been to Sea World with your class or family?  
Compare the Sea World of Ohio with ours here in Orlando.

Fill in the sentences with the proper word. (see words below)

- 1) Hundreds of school children go to the sea on \_\_\_\_\_.
- 2) They learn how the fish \_\_\_\_\_ in the water environment.

- 3) Changes in the water environment can bring \_\_\_\_\_  
to the animals.
- 4) A sea lion is a warm-blooded \_\_\_\_\_ of the sea.
- 5) Large fish \_\_\_\_\_ the smaller fish.
- 6) The largest animal in the sea is the \_\_\_\_\_.
- 7) Life in the sea, as on land, are closely \_\_\_\_\_  
to one another.

buses

survive

disaster

mammal

eat

killer whale

related

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

Here is a copy of Ranger Rick's Nature Magazine (March, 1978). If you like sea animals, you'll love this issue. Remember to save these issues as they will help you to be very smart in science class.

Read "Finny Friends" (p. 308) to see how fish eat, breathe and sleep under water.

Answer these questions--

- 1) What is a school of fish? (p. 8)
- 2) How do some fish protect themselves?
- 3) How big is the largest fish (p. 5)
- 4) What keeps a fish from sinking? (p. 4)
- 5) How does junk in the water harm fish?

\*\*\*\*\*

Some lucky children live on boats instead of in a house. Read the interesting letter from David Carkhuff to the magazine. He has a wonderful time traveling around the world with his parents. Discuss these questions with your Mom, Dad, Brother or Sister.

- a) Why didn't they have to steer the boat?
- b) What did they do in bad weather? (p. 30)

- c) What does navigating by the sun, moon, stars mean?
- d) How did the father get sick? (p. 30-31)
- e) Why did they use salt water for bathing?
- f) How would you like to live on a boat? Where would you like to visit?

We live in a state (Florida) where there are lots of alligators. Read "The Alligator Case" (p. 37-39) and see what has happened to them.

- 1) Why were alligators so valuable? (p. 37)
- 2) What is the Endangered Species List?
- 3) Does Florida have enough alligators now?
- 4) Have you heard any alligator stories? \_\_\_\_\_ Which one?

If you want to see some live alligators ask your Mom or Dad to take you to Gatorland in Kissimmee, Florida. Be careful and obey the signs.

\*\*\*\*\*

Be sure to look at the section on "Antlers, Horns and What-Cha-Ma-Call-Its" (p. 22-27).

"The White Stork" (p. 41-46) has beautiful pictures.

\*\*\*\*\*

Say each of the words below to yourself. Write the number of syllables you hear.

- |                |       |                 |       |
|----------------|-------|-----------------|-------|
| 1. woman       | _____ | 9. face         | _____ |
| 2. dolphin     | _____ | 10. hotel       | _____ |
| 3. such        | _____ | 11. blueberries | _____ |
| 4. quiet       | _____ | 12. village     | _____ |
| 5. beginning   | _____ | 13. grandfather | _____ |
| 6. clothes     | _____ | 14. leaves      | _____ |
| 7. loudspeaker | _____ | 15. signal      | _____ |
| 8. picture     | _____ | 16. storekeeper | _____ |

## APPENDIX C

### ACTIVITY PAGES SENT TO THE EXPERIMENTAL GROUP OBTAINED FROM THE ELECTRIC COMPANY GUIDE ACTIVITY BOOK

The experimental group received 12 activity sheets that were obtained from the Electric Company Guide Activity Book, Book 1. The page numbers and skill objectives for each activity is presented below.

<u>Page Number</u>	<u>Skill Objective</u>
62	Reinforce FL consonant blend
71	Reinforce PR consonant blend
81	Reinforce SW consonant blend
121	Review of short a vowel sound in words
124	Review of short e vowel sound in words
126	Review of short i vowel sound in words
129	Review of short u vowel sound in words
131	Review of all vowel sounds
174-75	Reinforce double consonants
198	Larger spelling patterns "tion"



## BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH

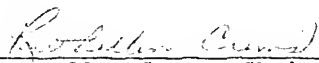
Adrienne Mills Perry was born in New York, New York, on April 23, 1941, to the union of Charles and Lucille Mills. She grew up in Queens, New York, and graduated from Flushing High School in 1958. She attended Hunter College, New York City, for two years and transferred to the State University at Oswego, New York, where she graduated in 1962 with a B.S. in Elementary Education. She worked as a teacher for the New York City Board of Education in various jobs and capacities for 10 years. Graduate work was completed at Teachers College, Columbia University, in 1967 with a M.A. in Reading.

In 1972, she and her husband Jim and family moved to Augusta, Georgia, where they lived for two years. She worked as a Lead Reading Teacher for the Richmond County Board of Education while in Georgia. They migrated farther south to a suburb of Orlando, Florida, in 1974. She worked at Florida Technological University for one year and entered the doctoral program at the University of Florida in 1975. She is currently employed as coordinator/instructor of reading at Seminole Community College.

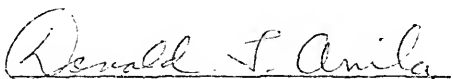
She holds professional membership in the International Reading Association, Florida Community College Reading Council, Florida State Reading Council, and Phi Delta Kappa. She has

three wonderful children, Willis, Jaimon, and Kamilah, and a lovely mother-in-law, Mrs. Julia Perry.

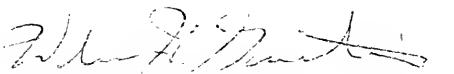
I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

  
Ruthellen Crews, Chairperson  
Professor of Curriculum and  
Instruction

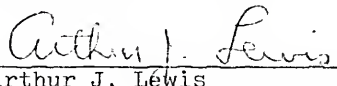
I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

  
Donald L. Avila  
Professor of Foundations of  
Education


I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

  
Wilson J. Guertin  
Professor of Foundations of  
Education

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

  
Arthur J. Lewis  
Chairman, Division of Curriculum  
and Instruction

I certify that I have read this study and that in my opinion it conforms to acceptable standards of scholarly presentation and is fully adequate, in scope and quality, as a dissertation for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Lawrence L. Smith  
Assistant Professor of  
Instructional Leadership and  
Support

This dissertation was submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Division of Curriculum and Instruction in the College of Education and to the Graduate Council, and was accepted as partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy.

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Dean, Graduate School

UNIVERSITY OF FLORIDA



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